DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 218 508 CE 033 164

TITLE Progressing from Vocational Preparation--the Issues. A Discussion Paper.
INSTITUTION Further Education Curriculum Review and Development, London (England).
PUB DATE Jan 82
NOTE 19p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; Adolescents; Adult Education; Basic Skills; *Career Education; Dropout Programs; Dropouts; *Educational Needs; Educational Objectives; Educational Policy; *Education Work Relationship; *Employment Potential; Financial Support; Fused Curriculum; *Job Skills; *Job Training; Policy Formation; Position Papers; Program Design; Program Development; Relevance (Education); Skill Development; Vocational Education; Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Great Britain

ABSTRACT

If vocational preparation is to become a central educational process, available to all young people whether or not they are involved in other study or training, then it must be recognized as such. While there appears to be a growing acceptance of prevocational courses from both the educational and training systems, there remain at least three major problem areas to be solved before a comprehensive and fair system of vocational preparation can be operated. These are the existing financial award system, the current danger of restricting vocational preparation to a specific group, and the inaccessibility of some participants to opportunities to progress to more advanced education and training. Educators must work to link the characteristics of vocational preparation to all programs of study and training, whether grouped or modular. Among various points in the program from which learning could progress are the following: a teaching/learning approach dealing initially with essential core skills, an approach based on vocational motivation, an approach based on experience in another occupational area, and an approach based on significant expertise. Particularly needed are efforts to enable students to apply, with discernment, school-based competencies to day-to-day working problems. (MN)

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Further Education Curriculum Review and Development Unit

ED218508

Progressing from Vocational Preparation—the Issues

a discussion paper

CE033164

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January 1982

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Your reference

Our reference

Date December 1981

Chief Education Officers
Principals of FE Establishments
Secretaries of Regional and FE Examining Bodies
Press, and
Other Interested Institutions/Individuals

Dear Sir/Madam

PROGRESSING FROM VOCATIONAL PREPARATION

The FEU Board of Management, in the light of Government statements on youth training and on the new 17+ pre-vocational certificate, have been considering the various issues related to the task of ensuring that programmes of vocational preparation for young people have built into them opportunities for progression. Accordingly I have been instructed to circulate an issues paper for general discussion and this is attached for your consideration.

As the concluding paragraphs of the paper imply, progression is dependent on a variety of factors; the Board appreciates that whilst those concerned with resources cannot be ignored, others concerned with quality and design are equally important. These especially require discussion and the FHE validating and training bodies have been invited to participate in a seminar on 19th February.

The Board was also of the opinion that colleges and local authorities, etc concerned with this problem may find the paper of some use and indeed may wish to comment. The Board would value such comments especially if they arrive in time to report to the seminar on 19th February. It is appreciated that this represents a short-time scale, but there is little doubt that we are at a critical phase with respect to the national design of programmes of training and education for young people.

The FEU would hope before too long to publish a more definitive document on aspects of progressing from vocational preparation, but comments from all those concerned are an essential pre-requisite to such a publication.

Yours faithfully

Jack Mansell

JACK MANSELL
Director

Designed by a student of Mid-Cheshire College of Further Education

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PROGRESSING FROM VOCATIONAL PREPARATION - A DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

WHERE WE ARE

1. The FEU welcomes the general approval by the Government of the MSC NEW TRAINING INITIATIVE proposals. It also welcomes the priority to be given by the MSC* for the fulfilment of the second objective of NTI aiming to produce vocational preparation opportunities for young school leavers on a wider scale than ever before. Indeed the FEU would maintain that given a common framework of sound design, vocational preparation programmes are capable of providing the base on which a more open new style skill training system can be built.

2. Due in no small part to the pioneering work of the MSC special programmes, there now exist new attitudes with respect to the way we should educate and train our school-leavers so that they may successfully make the transition from school to work. The acquisition and mastery of basic skills rightly remains a key element of vocational preparation, but there has also emerged a greater acceptance of the necessity to construct programmes based on the individual needs of young people related to their personal development, self evaluation and their ability to relate to local employment circumstances. Thus counselling, guidance and experience in a work situation are now generally accepted as central elements of such programmes. Much the same applies to adults in transition.

3. From this has come a growing consensus that vocational preparation programmes have to be provided on an inter-agency basis. LEAs, schools, colleges, training centres, employers, voluntary associations etc, can all be legitimately involved in such

*See paragraph 18 of NTI - An Agenda for Action MSC December 1981

Designed by a student of Mid-Cheshire College of Further Education

programmes whatever the base of provision. Indeed one of the few reservations that the FEU had with respect to NTI was its apparent omission of college-based vocational preparation courses, from which young people would be released to work-experience. In practice however there is no doubt that the MSC recognises the contribution that the education system could and should make to vocational preparation.

A NEW AND WIDER PROVISION

4. Another major effect of NTI is that opportunities for vocational preparation should now become available to a larger population of young school leavers. It is this wider opportunity that allows NTI to be regarded as progressive to an extent not possible to associate with other improvements in our training system that have occurred over the last 15 years. We have in the UK a history of persistent neglect of the majority of our young people once they leave school; a neglect that has been exposed in the light of increasing youth unemployment. Similarly, much of the existing YOP provision has been criticised because of its non-educational approach and its ephemeral value. It is essential, in any new system, that we move away from schemes based on youth unemployment towards programmes focussed on personal development.

5. The primary aim of this paper is to emphasise that if vocational preparation is to become a central educational process, available to all young people whether or not they are involved in other study or training, then it must be recognised as such. Thus if NTI is to be a vehicle for a long overdue provision, then its design-base must allow and encourage progression to more advanced education and/or training by a wider range of school leavers than has hitherto been pssible. This will mean, as we explain below, not only new attitudes towards selection and assessment, changed concepts of skill and competence, different ways of defining access and success, but probably a radical re-appraisal of many of our more "advanced" education and training courses.

A COMMON FRAMEWORK

6. There appears to be a growing acceptance of PRE-VOCATIONAL courses from both the educational and training systems. The new 17+ examination system is intended to allow both schools and colleges to provide this type of course, CGLI, RSA and other FE validating bodies are also providing courses in this area. The FEU has already attempted to include all these courses within the general concept of VOCATIONAL PREPARATION, provided they include certain key curriculum themes.* Also within this concept, subject to the same criteria, we would include YOP and UVP schemes; our

*See 'Vocational Preparation' Section IV, FEU 1981: Negotiation; Counselling, Guidance and Assessment; Relevance and Experience.

consultations and liaison with the various providers of these schemes lead us to claim that there exists already a curriculum framework capable of serving the aims of any new traineeship concept that comes out of NTI. There remains an urgent need to mediate this framework to all providers, participants and consumers and to translate it into national and local guidelines for operation. This we believe could be done by joint MSC/FEU statements, and discussions on this possibility are already under way.

STATUS: FINANCE, CONTINUITY AND PROGRESSION

7. There remain however at least three major problem areas to be solved before a comprehensive and fair system of vocational preparation can be operated. The first is the financial award system that requires to be associated with the young people who participate in these schemes; the second is the way in which we are in danger of restricting vocational preparation to a specific group; the third is the opportunity for progression to more advanced education and training that may or may not exist for the participants. All three areas are related to STATUS and all are critical to the success of any new system of continuing education and training.

8. It is possible now, to find in colleges and elsewhere, young people undergoing similar learning experiences in the same group but between them receiving different levels of financial support; ranging from zero, LEA discretionary award grants, through unemployment benefit and DHSS allowances, to YOP grants. The provision is ad-hoc, accidental or determined by a local situation. The effect is confusing, frustrating and grossly unfair. It seems impossible to conceive an effective inter-agency system of curricular provision operating within such a chaotic framework of financial provision. As a curriculum body, we can do little more than identify the present unsatisfactory situation as one which inevitably must interfere with the curriculum process. If, however, vocational preparation is to be available to all "students" or "trainees", wherever it is based, then it should carry with it responsibilities for the trainees* in terms of attendance and satisfactory progress etc, responsibilities for the providers in terms of adequate teaching and monitoring etc and responsibilities for the Government in terms of recognition and financial support.

PERMEATION

9. Much of what follows from paragraph 11 is concerned with the short-term problem of progressing YOP/UVP/ABC-type programmes into existing structures at some "level-2" state. This is because much of our current thinking is pre-occupied with those young

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*The term "trainee" is here and elsewhere used as a shorthand expression for any learner.

people at risk due to unemployment. This is inevitable and right; but in adopting that priority we must not forget that a policy of vocational preparation for all carries with it an obligation to appraise existing structures and courses to ascertain whether they are capable of developing the concept at a more advanced level. Vocational preparation if it is to be central to the educational process, is not something which comes and goes with different age groups and with different programme levels: the functions of counselling, negotiation, the renewal of basic skills, etc are continuous. Their structure and degree of sophistication will vary from level to level and from individual to individual but in essence they form the corner stones of continuing education, whether or not it is job specific.

There are few existing functional courses or examinations which can claim to carry forward and develop the concept of vocational preparation in this way.

10. Thus in suggesting, as we do below, that progression into existing course structures is essential, we are not necessarily assuming that existing courses are entirely suitable. Vocational preparation is concerned with preparing for change - an undeniably desirable aim - which rarely exists in "advanced" programmes except implicity or in restricted technological forms. For although not immediately central to the (short-term) aim of this discussion document, sooner or later a more astringent discussion than has occurred hitherto, of the curricular relationship between the NTI objectives 1*, 2** and 3*** will be necessary.

It seems generally accepted that a training system based on agreed standards of skill, giving progression through further learning and additionally providing for adults, opportunities to acquire, increase or update their skills and knowledge - will probably require a modular construction. Such a system may well comprise separate training modules, to be learned in a variety of modes and locations, associated with firm testing and grading criteria. It would be the thesis of paragraph 9 that, without

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* "We must develop skill training including apprenticeship in such a way as to enable young people entering at different ages and with different educational attainments to acquire agreed standards of skill appropriate to the jobs available and to provide them with a basis for progression through further learning."

** "We must move towards a position where all young people under the age of 18 have the opportunity either of continuing in full time education or of entering training or a period of planned work experience combining work-related training and education."

*** "We must open up widespread opportunities for adults, whether employed, unemployed or returning to work, to acquire, increase or update their skills and knowledge during the course of their working lives."

the voc-prep framework of negotiation, counselling, guidance etc relating personal development to the job situation, a modular system whilst appearing flexible and progressive could in fact be mechanistic, non-progressive and unduly prescriptive. For example, there is no shortage of evidence+ to show that many adults requiring to change or upgrade their skills, require to be involved in supportive learning experiences and in many cases need to furbish their basic skills of learning, numeracy and communication etc. A modular structure of training so convergent on job-skill standards that it excluded this type of individual support, would not we feel be in line with the opportunities described in paragraph 32 of NTI. If we are eventually to construct a comprehensive and open modular system of training such as suggested in paragraph 21 of An Agenda for Action, then it should somehow be as able to relate to the needs of individuals as to the specific skills of a particular job.

We need to work towards the linking of the characteristics of vocational preparation to all programmes of study and training, whether grouped or modular. In this way will it achieve the permeation it deserves. This is a complex problem and for the moment it must remain a long term strategy, but it could be an important factor in achieving the flexible workforce we require. In the short-term we concentrate on more immediate issues.

AN INTELLECTUAL APARTHEID

11. Nearer to the process of curricular design is the problem of progression. It remains one of the more persistent criticisms associated with many pre-vocational courses that they do not automatically gain access to more advanced education/training. In practice, the curriculum providers can provide data to show that many young people from such courses do so progress. But such progress appears fortuitous rather than planned and whilst the CGLI* have made an interesting start in recognising the

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+ The works of Belbin and Welford are typical sources of this evidence

* The CGLI through its Hargreaves Committee have already indicated that they accept the principle of accelerated entry to Part 2 schemes. This Sub-Committee of the CGLI Joint Advisory Council for Engineering is reviewing the Institute's Engineering courses. Part of the conclusions in the 'Sub-Committee Interim Report' published in June 1981 reads:

> "...the Sub Committee support the principle of vocational preparation for young people proposed by the FEU in their recent report (Vocational Preparation). There are implications in the proposals for Part 1 200 in order to provide for accelerated entry to Part 2 as applicable. It is emphasised however that co-ordinated vocational preparation, including the acquisition of vocational FE and practical skills is particularly important in order to satisfy the needs of employers and ensure that the output is employable. In this latter context, the Institute should play a leading role in the compilation of positive schems embracing the essential elements of vocational preparation and vocational skills."

possibility of an accelerated entry by vocational preparation candidates into its Part II engineering Craft courses, this remains an uncommon and relatively untested idea. It is already possible to find young people who have, since the age of 15, experienced a variety of pre-vocational courses including work experience, but in terms of conventional educational and training schemes, they remain unacceptable and apparently inferior to their peers with more conventional examination successes. In short, we are in danger of perpetuating a form of intellectual apartheid if we allow, by neglect or design, vocational preparation to become a non-progressive mode of educational/training provision, having all the characteristics of a 'tertiary modern' sector and by implication associated with low ability school leavers.

12. There is also a possibility that because many of the new initiatives associated with young people emanate from the MSC and much of the provision is from outside formal education, the education system from the DES downwards is in danger of being accused of turning its back on this group of young people. There is little on record with which to answer this accusation, and this makes possible the postulation of yet another variant of the "two-nation" theory. The FEU does not support this type of accusation although its work since 1977 indicates that it is only too aware of the persistent neglect of over half our population by the post-school education system. What it does consider disturbing is that there are already signs that a significant amount of selection is beginning to take place on MSC YOP schemes and that they too could become divisive. If we are to have a comprehensive scheme of vocational preparation then it must provide a wider range of opportunities for more young people. In this we believe we are at one with the MSC and in that situation many problems can be overcome by sound curriculum design, although others will only be solved by changes in attitudes, organisation and resources. With respect to the apparent neglect by the education system of this sector of young people, we believe it is possible to improve this situation by a new 17+ curriculum which deliberately bridges the schism that exists between education and training by openly declaring that it will satisfy the criteria of vocational preparation to which we refer in paragraph 6 above. This means some recognition of experiential learning and we see no reason why any new 17+ certification should not include the accreditation of planned experience.

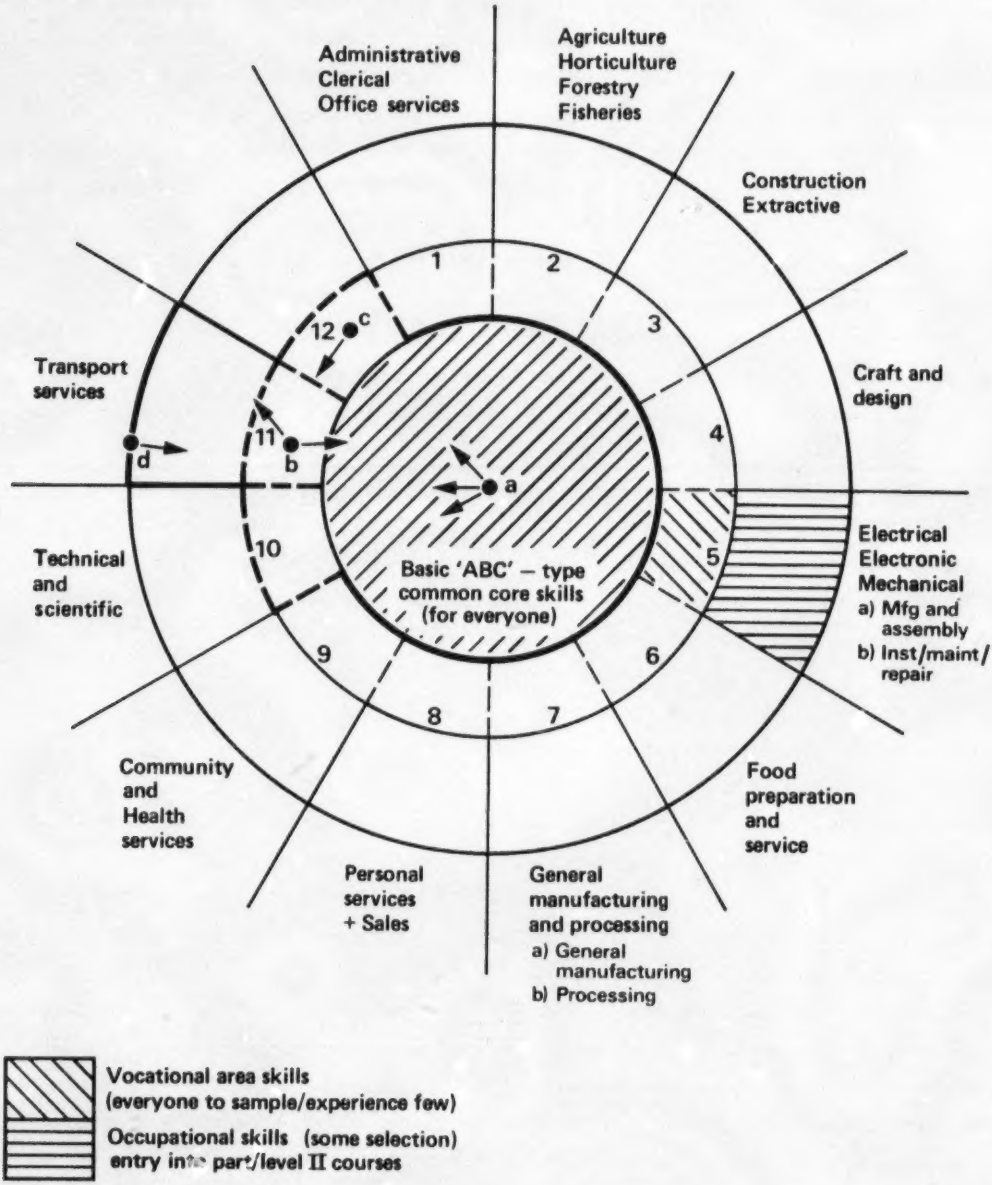
ALLOWING PROGRESSION

13. For progression from programmes of vocational preparation to more "advanced" programmes of education and/or training to become for more young people a reality, we require changes in attitude to bring about changes in design. Employers should recognise the value of broad-based generic vocational preparation. Validating and examining bodies should describe access to their "level-2" programmes additionally

in terms of vocational preparation. The new 17+ examination should conform to vocational preparation criteria. The new-style training system into which most young people would eventually hope to enter, should recognise vocational preparation as a desirable entry mode. The status of vocational preparation should be endorsed by Government both in terms of resources and legislation. Vocational preparation should be available to all young people in a variety of modes and from a range of bases. It should be regarded as a valuable and necessary part of the post-16 curricula whether or not additional study and/or training exists. For most young people such a programme will take up a significant part of their time for a year. Some will be able to satisfy the demands of that programme and concurrently study and/or train in other areas. Others may require more than one year to satisfy a basic programme. Vocational preparation to be accreditable, must also include, where appropriate, tests of competence.

14. The nature of the progression that young people will make from vocational preparation will obviously relate to the level of achievement of each young person. Some selection and testing are inevitable elements of progression but many of the existing criteria and methods are too restrictive, based as they are on norm - referenced examinations of doubtful predictive validity, and on the needs of conventional long-term training. These long-term programmes of training such as existing apprenticeships, whilst in some cases still essential, are available for only a minority of workers. It is generally agreed that in their present form many apprenticeships are proving to be inflexible and restrictive, and their relationship to new jobs is doubtful. We must therefore set up a training system which demonstrates that there are more opportunities for young people outside the present apprenticeship scheme than within it. This can be done by radically widening the existing apprenticeship system and recognising broader clusters of training areas at the initial stage. Employers will have to be persuaded that vocational preparation related to one of these clusters will produce for them adaptable young people with broad-based competencies having some orientation towards that sector of employment. Job specific training to any marked degree is only compatible with vocational preparation if the probability of employment is high. Young people will have to be persuaded that vocational preparation will give them broad-based skills enabling them to seize a variety of job opportunities within the larger occupational structure to which they should have been realistically guided and on which they have based their choice. Programmes that reduce choice are illiberal and, in an age of accelerating change their relevance must be questioned. There is, for example, an imminent probability of automation being available for that part of the manufacturing spectrum which produces 5,000-250,000 units pa. Most manufacturing falls into this category and potential change of this nature cannot be ignored.

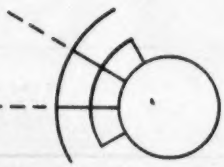
Figure 1 Framework for progression (over 1 or 2 years)



Vocational area skills
(everyone to sample/experience few)

Occupational skills (some selection)
entry into part/level II courses

Figure 1a An individual's voc–prep programme



15. Work on training clusters has been done by several organisations, but for the purpose of this paper we use the system of 11 OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING FAMILIES recently suggested by IMS*. We do not fully accept the suitability of these particular families, but they were always recognised as tentative and we use them here merely to illustrate our thesis. Figure 1 indicates these 11 training families and how they could relate to a pattern of progression. (A twelfth - unclassified segment is included simply to indicate the openness of the designations). The outer circle represents the interface of vocational preparation with existing and potential "level-2" type training and education. At the moment "level-2" can only be described in terms of existing and educational/training programmes such as CGLI Part II schemes, TEC level II, BEC National, RSA II/III Certificates ... and employers' second-year training schemes. Hopefully, however, implementation of the NTI objectives will encourage the recognition of many more "level-2" schemes based on experience and competence as well as on educational criteria, thus providing not only a wider spectrum of opportunity for young people, but more opportunities for adults. Such "level-2" schemes should not necessarily be age- or time-related, they should be based on competence; but as we have said in paragraphs 9 and 10 they too should eventually have regard to the assimilation of the principles of vocational preparation.

16. The bold outline in Fig 1 shows the individual nature of the vocational preparation we are presently describing, and it is shown isolated in Fig 1a. For each young person the programme will comprise an inner-circle of common-core skills, some occupational sampling of which 3 are shown for illustrative purposes and an outer segment of more specific occupational skills. Having regard to the principles contained in "Vocational Preparation", each programme should be unique in part at least to each individual; it should relate to at least one Occupational Training Family and it should include skills and experiences at each "layer" of the programme. For these principles to hold, there must be some negotiation with and counselling of, the young participant. There must be some negotiation between the various agencies providing the programme: employer-college-voluntary association etc. There must be a system of monitoring and assessment capable of recording such elements as work - and residential - experience and a range of skills; for this the FEU work among others have recommended a student/trainee profile. Finally there must be recognition and accreditation of the skills and experiences recorded on that profile and the FEU is now approaching the FHE examining/validating bodies and the training agencies to see how they can assist in this process.

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* Youth Skills Project, Progress Report. Institute of Manpower Studies 1981

17. As we have said elsewhere* we would hope that the teaching-learning strategies employed by the "tutors" on these programmes whether based in employment, a residential environment, college or a combination of these - will be related to the experience and motivation of the young participant. Fig 1 illustrates various points in the programme from which learning could progress:

eg point a. a teaching/learning approach dealing initially with essential core-skills;

point b. an approach based on vocational motivation (eg knowledge of motor-vehicles in this case);

point c. an approach based upon experience in another occupational area (eg because of change in local employment pattern);

point d. an approach based on significant expertise (eg considerable work experience).

(The relevance of c. and d. to adult re-training should be apparent.)**

NEW APPROACHES TO SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

18. It is nevertheless, the problem of recognition and accreditation that persists, for much of what we have described so far in paragraphs 15-17 does exist, except for planned progression. It is apparently not enough to call for changed attidudes from employers, educationalists and examing bodies. We doubt also whether the structure outlined in Fig 1 will be itself sufficient to bring about these changed attitudes. We have already indicated above that there should be a firmer relationship than is apparent between the vocational preparation (proposed in objective 2 of NTI) and the new skill training system (proposed in objective 1 of NTI). We believe that this relationship will rest heavily on the way in which we define, teach, learn and test skills. The FEU is hoping to produce further guidance in this area within the next few months, but because of its significance to progression, some discussion appears in this paper.

*For example: "Experience Reflection" learning (FEU 1978); "A Basis for Choice" (FEU 1979); "Vocational Preparation" (FEU 1981)

**For example, the FEU is currently engaged in a research project concerning Basic Education provision for Adult Unemployed. The project aims to describe and appraise the provision of basic adult education by a local technical college in a town hit by large-scale unemployment and the reduction of British Steel activities. Large numbers of adult unemployed, particularly reducdant steelworkers, have enrolled on to a number of college courses, including basic education, and this project charts their progress and records their experiences of this return to learning. Completion date: November 1982. A Project Information Bulletin (PIB/RP41) is available.

19. There is increasing evidence to show* that the skills common to most jobs are, roughly in order, those of Reading, Listening and Talking, Planning and Problem Solving, Basic calculations, Writing, Manipulative skills, Measuring and Drawing. Now whilst each of these contain their own hierarchy of increasing complexity, there is little doubt that basic competence levels in each of these areas are valued by employers, who realise that from such a base, further training and development is possible. What appears to be lacking in many young people is the ability to apply with discernment, school-based competencies to day-to-day working problems. This raises the question as to whether at school level, the curriculum for most young people is too pre-occupied with content related to conventional examination syllabuses, and not enough emphasis or time is given to mastery of core skills making transferability to common day to day problems more likely. There is little doubt that with the new information technology, the immediate availability of data will require basic competencies in communication to an extent not necessarily realised. For many, if not most young people, it is more essential for them to achieve these basic competencies than to achieve conventional examination success which, in reflecting content, may not adequately monitor and assess at an individual level the prossession and use of core-skills. Perhaps teachers less than society are to blame for our somewhat obsessive loyalty to a rather divisive system of norm- rather than criterion-referenced examinations. Whatever the reason it is not here appropriate to rehearse the limitations (and strengths) of the present 16+ examination system, simply to say that if mastery of basic core-skills is required for all then the curriculum process should deliberately set out to provide, test and record them - all hopefully in way which will encourage and reward success rather than penalise failure.

20. There is also no lack of evidence** to indicate that employers give considerable weight to characteristics such as versatility, initiative, pride in workmanship, conscientiousness, timekeeping ..... etc, especially when they are related to the work situation. Such characteristics do not readily lend themselves to conventional examining, and whilst the formal education system must beware of making extravagant claims with respect to its potential in achieving affective aims, there is little doubt again that an undue emphasis on content and academic success prevents many young people from receiving adquate counselling in social, life, work and entrepreneurial skills.

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* For example see FEU Project Information Bulletin RP37: Basic Skill Training

**Industrial Training Research Unit. "The A - Z Study: differences between improvers and non-improvers among young unskilled workers". ITRU: 1979.

21. The FEU is therefore not without support in suggesting in its publications * that dynamic check-lists, of core-skills, counselling, planned experiences, vocational focussing and profiling - all with an emphasis on competence as much as content - are the necessary components of vocational preparation. What is essential is that such programmes should be conceived and perceived by all participants whether teachers or learners, as a coherent programme of development. This coherence is a characteristic not always associated with many of the existing YOP schemes. It is because of this need that the FEU stresses the role of NEGOTIATION ** and "contracts" as ways forward in achieving the contribution of the various agencies providing such programmes and the involvement of the young people themselves. Education isolated from work, experience isolated from education, work isolated from development - are not likely to successfully build a programme of progression. Teachers, youth workers and supervisors must somehow see themselves as all contributing to the fulfilment of common aims. Only in this way are we likely to get to the young person the reinforcement and transferability that appears necessary to real competence.

"MAINSTREAM" FE INVOLVEMENT

22. It follows from the above that if QUALITY is to be an essential ingredient for progression then the involvement of subject experts with a knowledge of the work situation is crucial. So far, for no doubt very good reasons, there has been a general lack of involvement by "mainstream" vocational departments in what we have described above as vocational preparation programmes. This is not to say that many vocational subject teachers are not already engaged in implementing many of the principles of vocational preparation in their own subject teaching. But here we suspect the inclusion of these principles is more a function of teacher style than of deliberate course design. All too often pre-vocational courses are being constructed by simply "cobbling together" existing vocational examination subjects, having little regard for the supportive framework of personal development and counselling that we need to associate with vocational preparation. This lack of involvement has often resulted in a gap between the skills imparted by the general education teachers and those required in a work situation. Multi-skills workshops

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* **FEU** : "A Basis for Choice" 1979 "Vocational Preparation 1981
"Supporting YOP" 1979 "Active Learning : A Guide" 1979
"Developing Science and Life Skills" 1980 "ABC in Action" 1981

run only by general educationalists are rarely able to demonstrate or simulate the demands of the work situation in terms of pace and quality. On the other hand, work experience, linked solely to output is similarly unable to guarantee the acquisition of those skills and core-competences essential to progression. The dimension that is often missing is the contribution of the professional "technical" teacher who should be able to provide much of the quality and translate it into terms of work. This is not to say that they simply have to provide the same type of subject expertise as they have previously to day-release and other vocationally-committed trainees. As we have pointed out, the design of vocational preparation courses requires them to provide in conjunction with their general education colleagues, a more supportive role than before. Also, with the adoption of the principle of occupational groupings (or clusters) such as illustrated in Fig 1, such teachers will have to relate much of their skill training to a context wider than a single job. To develop curricula and to construct student-profiles, they will have to identify key skills and around them devise assignments producing maximum transferability. Properly done, the job they are required to do will be extremely demanding: for in addition to a supportive counselling function they have somehow to generalise the learning of specific skills without reducing standards of quality and the power of progression to "level-2". This is an essential but challenging role; it requires staff development and support, but above all it requires involvement.

A ROLE FOR THE VALIDATING AND TRAINING BODIES

23. But involvement by college vocational departments and teachers is not enough. As we have implied in paragraphs 9 and 16 there is a vital role to play by the existing FHE validating and training bodies, both short-term and long-term, in the recognition of vocational preparation as a permanent feature of at least post-school education and training. As we have said elsewhere * Rightly or wrongly, the importance attached to certification based on examinations appears to be a major feature of our society ... and in the UK at least being 'non examinable' is tantamount to a social stigma". Much of what we have said implies that the present examination system appears unrelated to at least half of our population. Whether this is a matter of educational validity, access, geographic location or real ability - is a matter for debate. What appears to be beyond doubt is that much of our examining system is unable to reveal the rich variety of talent and achievement that many of our "non-qualified" young people (and adults) possess. This indeed was one of the reason why we have attempted to promote the student-profile. The risks

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* paragraph 39 "Vocational Preparation" FEU 1981

are not insignificant but the potential benefits are greater, provided the existing system is willing to recognise the worth of the skills and experiences recorded on those profiles. By identifying the short-term priority of vocational preparation programmes for young people at risk we are in danger of isolating that group, if not the whole concept, from the larger long-term aim of integrating vocational preparation into mainstream education and training.

24. An immediate and positive response by the appropriate FHE and training bodies to this problem would greatly enhance the possibility of a more comprehensive system of post school opportunity for a previously neglected population. This in the long term should increase the participation rate in existing "advanced" programmes. Such a response probably means new ways of defining access to "level-2" programmes and some recognition of the generic nature of those vocational preparational skills related to occupational clusters.

25. Given a co-operative approach involving all the agencies, given sound curriculum design involving national guidelines and local initiatives, given sufficient resources and staff development, there is every hope that vocational preparation can bridge the gaps that too often exist within and between education and work: between general and technical, between academic and non-academic, between professional and lay instruction. In bridging these gaps, some progression becomes possible if not inevitable.

26. This paper has attempted to make the case that without the possibility of progression to more advanced education/training, vocational preparation will become increasingly identified with the less-able unemployed young person.

27. We have attempted to describe the various factors necessary to achieve such progression and in so doing a complex pattern of inter-dependent relationships emerge. These form the summary of this document:

i. Vocational preparation programmes should be based on individual needs related to personal development and to a local employment situation. (para 2)

ii. Vocational preparation must be regarded as a inter-agency provision (para 3)

iii. Vocational preparation must be seen as a new provision of wider opportunity for all and not an ad-hoc reaction to youth unemployment. (para 4)

iv. An acceptable curriculum framework for vocational preparation already exists but there is an urgent need to mediate this framework to all providers, participants and consumers. (para 6)

v. There is a need to provide in both the short-term and long-term a satisfactory status for vocational preparation participants:

a. by more rational system of financial support (para 8);

b. by recognising that vocational preparation principles should not be restricted to a specific group of courses (para 9);

c. by recognising that the characterstics of vocational preparation should also relate to modular skill-training systems (para 10);

d. by planned recognition of vocational preparation by the FE examining/validating bodies (para 11);

e. by relating any new 17+ examination provision to vocational preparation (para 12);

f. by providing vocational preparation for all young people, whether or not they intend to enter HE etc (para 13).

vi. For wider opportunities of progression and choice to exist, a wider provision of training must be provided (para 14).

vii. A framework of progression is suggested based on:

a. broad occupational training clusters (para 15);

b. a combination of core-skills, vocational sampling and occupational skills (para 16);

c. a variety of learning strategies (para 17);

viii. We need to re-appraise our concepts of skills and the way in which we define, teach, learn and test them (para 18):

a. there should be less pre-occupation with content and more emphasis on mastery (para 19);

b. there should be more planned experience and counselling in social, life, work and entrepreneurial skills (para 20).

ix. Vocational preparation programmes should be perceived as a coherent programme of development, by all involved (para 21).

x. FE "mainstream" vocational departments and teachers must become involved in vocational preparation programmes (para 22).

xi. FHE validating and training bodies should positively respond to the problem of accreditation of vocational preparation trainees (para 24).

xii. Vocational preparation programmes should be able to bridge the gaps that exist within and between education and work: between general and technical, between academic and non-academic, between professional and lay instruction (para 25).

December 1981